Import of Tea

23. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to stop import of tea completely;

(b) whether Government are aware that there is surplus tea available in the country due to reduced exports; and

(c) how do Government plan to increase export of tea?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) No, Sir.

(b) The closing stock of tea for the year 1999-2000 at the end of September, 1999 was less than that during the same period last year due to considerable shortfall in production and increase in domestic consumption despite decrease in export volume during this period.

(c) Government and the Tea Board have been analysing country-wise exports of tea giving special attention to areas offering potential. Tea Board also acts to remove bottlenecks in exports to individual markets whenever these are noticed.

Other steps taken to increase exports of Indian tea include:—

(i) participation in major trade fairs/exhibitions abroad;

(ii) media campaign to increase consumer awareness of **the** speciality of Indian teas and to popularise the Tea Board Marketing symbol which stands for pure India tea.

Revival of sick tea Gardens

24. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government plan to revive the sick tea gardens in the public sector and also in private sector; and

(b) whether Government recommend merger of small and unviable tea estates?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) There is no proposal to revive any sick tea

garden in private sector. The incidence of sickness in the tea industry is low which is being taken care of by tea industry itself in the liberalised economic climate.

Tea Trading Corporation of India Ltd. (TTCI) is a wholly owned subsidiary of STC, which manages the administration of five tea gardens in the States of West Bengal and Assam. The company is facing an acute financial crunch being a loss making company and has been unable to discharge its obligations. The total liability of the Company is estimated around Rs. 36 crores as on 31.1.1997.

TTCI management has filed a petition in Calcutta High Court for liquidation of the company. The case is pending in the Court. TTCI is in the condition of ill economic health and it is not possible for the company to generate funds for revival of its gardens.

(b) No such proposal is under consideration of the Government.

Development of industries in NE Region

25. SHRI W. ANGOU SINGH: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) what steps have been taken by government to develop industries in the North-East Region;

(b) the number and kind of industries opened in the North-East Region. State-wise with details of financial/technical knowhow assistance; and

(c) whether there is any plan to open major industries in this region for more employement?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (DR. RAMAN): (a) Government has announced a new industrial policy for the North-Eastern Region on 24th December 1997 to promote industrialisation of the region. The various provisions of the policy have been implemented through issuance of necessary notifications.

(b) and (c) These measures are expected to encourage private sector industrial investment in the region. There are no proposals under Ministry of Commerce and industry to open major industries in this region.